

3. (Amended) The microfluidic device according to claim 1 comprising a plurality of microchannels and open chambers forming an array in the circular or rectangular format.
4. (Amended) The microfluidic device according to claim 1, wherein the microvolume contains one or more reactants that are soluble in the solvent or bound to a solid support in contact with the microvolume.
5. (Amended) The microfluidic device according to claim 4 wherein at least one of said one or more reactants is an affinity reactant selected from the group consisting of nucleic acids, peptides, and proteins.
6. (Amended) A method for replacing solvents evaporating from a microvolume of solvent placed in an open microarea of a microfluidic device comprising the step of replacing solvent continuously via a microchannel that transports liquid to the microarea from a liquid reservoir.
7. (Amended) The method of claim 6, wherein the microarea, microchannel and reservoir are parts of a microfluidic device.
8. (Amended) A method for replacing solvents for preventing samples from becoming desiccated comprising the following steps:
- providing a microarea for receiving a sample;
 - connecting the microarea to a reservoir of solvent by a microchannel;
 - applying the sample to the microarea;
 - allowing solvent to evaporate from said microarea; and
 - continuously replacing said evaporated solvent with solvent from said reservoir.
9. (Amended) The method of claim 8 further comprising the step of anchoring the sample to the microarea.

Please add the following new claims.

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10. (New) The method of claim 7, wherein the reservoir is positioned so as to create an overpressure in the solvent which is in equilibrium with the interfacial pressure difference across the curved surface of the droplet or said reservoir is connected to pump means that either facilitate replacement of solvent by pumping solvent or pressurising the reservoir.
11. (New) The method of claim 7, wherein the microfluidic device comprises a plurality of microchannels and open chambers forming an array in the circular or rectangular format.
12. (New) The method of claim 7, wherein the microarea carries a microvolume containing one or more reactants that are soluble in the solvent or bound to a solid support in contact with the microvolume.
13. (New) The method of claim 12, wherein at least one of said one or more reactants is an affinity reactant selected from the group consisting of nucleic acids, peptides, and proteins.

REMARKS

Claims 1-9 were in the original PCT application as filed. Applicant has amended claims 1-9 to delete the multiple dependency. Applicant has also added new claims 10-13, which relates to the subject matter that was contained in the multiple dependent claims of the PCT application. Applicant has included a marked up version of the claims as amended herein as Appendix A. For the convenience of the Examiner, Applicant has provided a clean copy of all pending claims as of the date of this preliminary amendment. Applicant asserts that no new matter has been added.

CONCLUSION

Claims 1-9 were in the original PCT application. Applicants have amended claims 1-9 to delete the multiple dependency and have added new claims 10-13 which related to the subject matter in the original multiple dependent claims. Therefore,